

SELF CARE

Self-care is about the things we can do to look after our own mental health

People and children that find life challenging and struggling, might not get much advice about how you could help themselves. From research, there are some strategies that people and children can try to help manage their wellbeing. Of course, it is up to the individual to decide what actually helps. If it works, keep doing it. If it doesn't, stop and try something else. If it does work, then share with other families who are finding things challenging. These strategies are not a substitute for seeing a mental health professional. Sometimes we might need outside help and advice.

This strategy, from the Anna Freud Organisation, is all about.....

Baking & cooking

If you have the equipment, baking or cooking can be a relaxing activity – at least for some people! It's not everyone's favourite thing to do, but, for those who enjoy it, spending some time making a nutritious meal or sweet treat from scratch is a satisfying and rewarding experience. Lots of people report that it allows their mind to switch off as they become absorbed in the task of preparing food, almost like a mindfulness exercise.

If you're looking for an easier version of this, you could try out some microwave recipes, which will save you time and energy if you're having an off day. For example, this microwave mug cake is perfect if you want to rustle up some quick comfort food. And there are various websites which can help you cook great meals on a budget.



Mug cakes for family fun

Double chocolate brownie mug cake

PREPARE: 2 MINUTES MICROWAVE: 1 MINUTE COOL: 10 MINUTES

This dense chocolate brownie is the perfect chocolate fix in a mug cake! If you prefer your brownies fudgier, then wait 10 minutes before eating. If you can't wait that long, then expect a gooey, softer, cake-like brownie. Perhaps try both ways at once to decide which way is best!

Mix together the oil and cocoa in the mug, until you have a thick chocolatey liquid. Add in the salt and sugar, and stir thoroughly until smooth. Using a fork, beat in the egg until fully combined. Carefully stir in the flour and baking powder, making sure both are completely incorporated. Fold in both the white and milk/semi-sweet chocolate chips. Microwave for 1 minute at 800W. The cake will rise, then sink a little and should still be quite wet to touch. It also may well drip a little down the sides of the cup. Leave the mug cake to cool for 10 minutes before eating if you prefer a fudgier brownie like me. Serve with a scoop of vanilla ice cream on top.

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1½ tablespoons cocoa powder
- a pinch of salt
- 3 tablespoons caster/ granulated sugar
- 1 UK medium/US large egg
- 2 tablespoons plain/ all-purpose flour
- a pinch of baking powder
- 1 tablespoon white chocolate chips
- 1 tablespoon milk/semi-sweet chocolate chips
- vanilla ice cream, to serve
- a tea cup or small microwavable mug

MAKES 1

We're pretty sure you already know this part, but make sure to be careful when handling hot objects and set a timer so you don't forget about what's in the oven. If cooking/baking feels like more of a chore to you, don't put any pressure on yourself to make complex meals from scratch – you could always save this for special occasions when you can get a friend or family member to help.

Working together to keep our children safe and happy

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